



Hispanic Oral Tradition: Form and Content

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Introduction—*John H. McDowell*

The nineteenth-century humanist Johann Gottfried von Herder distinguished “art poetry” from “natural poetry,” and he discovered in the latter “the heart and soul of a people” (Bluestein). Scholars aligned with the nation-building process all around the world have frequently turned to the traditions that issue directly from the life of human communities in the effort to capture their true character, to establish their authentic identities. Oral tradition emerges from the fabric of everyday existence; it responds to the immediate and ultimate problems posed by life in human societies. Its insights and artistry derive from individual genius tempered by collective assent. More than any other expressive product, oral literature provides access to the wisdom and resolve of a people acting within and sometimes against the confines of their historical destiny.

The Hispanic population of the United States nourishes a remarkable body of oral tradition produced through the encounter of Native American, European and African prototypes, and perpetrated in the midst of the North American polity. This lore conserves echoes of its origins even as it forges a contemporary expressive synthesis. It indexes the different Spanish-American communities that have flourished in the United States even as it provides a foundation for Pan-Hispanic communication and understanding. And most importantly, Hispanic oral tradition in the United States offers a unique perspective on the hopes and joys, the struggles and deceptions, that have marked the Hispanic experience in this Anglo-American clime.

Hispanic oral tradition encompasses several large inventories of expressive genres, each regional tradition featuring specific genres that are highly developed in that particular community. The full spectrum of oral genres found among the world’s peoples can be charted among U. S. Latinos. At the more formal end of the continuum, we find narrative and lyric poetry of the sort that graces

significant public events. At the more informal end, we find conversational forms such as jokes and personal experience stories. Riddles and rhymes associated with the enculturation of children are prominent in this Hispanic corpus of oral tradition. Traditional wonder stories and legends are present throughout the Hispanic community. Proverbs come readily to the Hispanic tongue as interlocutors draw on traditional wisdom in search of understanding and persuasive rhetoric. Attending to the form and content of these enduring expressive vehicles brings into focus the paradoxical nature of oral traditions, which evolve even as they persist.

The persistence of *corridos* on the lips of Mexican American citizens, of *décimas* among persons of Puerto Rican descent, the emergence of *salsa* with its Afro-Cuban rhythmic foundations, these and other manifestations of Hispanic oral tradition attest to the irrepressible vitality of Hispanic communities in the United States. These traditions have not merely survived as a remembrance of the old country; rather, they have evolved into living cultural resources answering to the needs of Hispanic peoples as they search out a niche in the general North American demographic landscape. And their impact has been felt far beyond the confines of the Hispanic communities, as the Latino musical style has mixed with other musical idioms in the artistic melting pot of modern North America. In the context of a nation whose ideology discourages the maintenance of alternative cultural systems, the florescence of Hispanic oral tradition is a moral victory of significant proportion.

Hispanic oral traditions circulate through word of mouth and through the intervention of the mass media in the form of records, cassettes, television programs, radio shows, and movies. Hispanic America cherishes the poetic word, and poetic forms often exist in association with music and dance. Hispanic folk poetry stands as one of the most vital strands of folk poetry in the contemporary United States. The prose forms, especially the narrative traditions, constitute one of our nation’s most remark-

able bodies of oral tradition. Hispanic storytelling in the United States is rich in legendry, in the form of tales of saints, heroes, witches and devils, and the Hispanic folktale is justly famous as one of the most hardy branches of the old European stock of wonder and mystery tales.

All of the forms of oral tradition, the poetic and the prosaic, have flourished among the Hispanic groups in the United States, as an evocation of a cherished homeland, and as resources for coping with travails in the adopted homeland.

Origins of Hispanic Oral Traditions

Peninsular Iberia with its strong Northern African inlay, Native America from the Caribbean to the Andes to the Amazonian jungle and sub-Saharan Africa in the guise of a hybrid slave culture that took root in tropical regions of the Americas have all contributed form and substance to the oral traditions of the New World's Hispanic peoples. From the beginning of the Spanish presence in the New World, the rich and diverse oral traditions of Iberia have been transplanted in the Spanish colony and constantly reinforced through a continued pattern of contact between the mother country and its former colonies. Since the Spaniards arrived as military conquerors and then settled in as the dominant political and economic element, their language and their traditional expressive genres achieved a special saliency in the resulting cultural composites. But even as Spanish language and culture achieved this eminence, it became inflected into a thousand different regional varieties, each one revealing the impact of substrate African and Native American configurations, as well as the imprint of specific Spanish regional styles.

The situation is complex beyond belief. A diversified Spanish inventory of traditional song and story arrives on the shores of a continent which is itself highly diverse. There the intruders and aboriginals work out a variety of arrangements with respect to the autonomy of these separate cultural strains. A third element enters the picture: Africa with its splendid traditions of poetry, song, dance and story. These three elements, each one diverse in its own right, blend in varying degree, sometimes with all three on an equal footing, sometimes with two or one of them preponderant. The resulting cultural products are almost always synthetic, inadvertent witnesses to the process of mutual accommodation that has characterized the formation of culture in the New World.

As a result, each Latin American region has evolved its own particular version of this multiple inheritance, and it is these regional adaptations that have been transported to the United States as prized cultural possessions. The Iberian originals were first "Americanized" in regional Latin American settings and then further adapted to the peculiar cultural climate of the United States. The two most important branches of this vast cultural trunk are

the Mexican and the Caribbean, represented most abundantly by the traditions of Puerto Rican and Cuban Americans. Other significant contributions derive from Central American, Andean and Southern Cone immigrants to the United States.

Transformations within the U. S. Context

The United States, with its ideology of assimilation, has been a rather unfriendly climate for the perpetuation of a Hispanic oral tradition. But within U. S. Latino communities, the elders have insisted on the relevance of lore and poetry from the old country, and the younger generations have found ingenious applications of this precious store of knowledge. It is interesting to note how these oral traditions evoke a particular period in the history of the home country, and how they have been streamlined to deal with different settings and predicaments in the U. S. context. The presence of *La llorona* (weeping woman) on almost every block within Chicano neighborhoods in the United States is a telling sign of the vitality of these traditions in their new setting.

Hispanic forms of oral tradition have prospered wherever Latin American communities have taken root in U. S. soil. The presence of community has favored the retention of the Spanish language as a vital means of communication, and with the language comes the vivid world of Hispanic oral tradition. But the new setting has occasioned important changes in the old stock of oral tradition. Where Hispanic people from different regions and countries have come together, there has been a tendency for hybrid, pan-Hispanic cultural forms to develop. Where Hispanic communities have felt the impact of their English-speaking, non-Hispanic surrounding, the traditional resources have moved in the direction of creolization, or blending of distinct cultural traditions into a cultural composite. In many inner-city settings, Hispanic traditions have come into contact with African American traditions, creating a particular intersection of urban Black and urban Latino. Where Hispanic families have landed beyond the circle of the Latino community, the retention of language and oral tradition has been a difficult and often impossible task, but sometimes accomplished through the maintenance of a strong Hispanic culture within the family.

The economic and political forces affecting U. S. Latino communities have produced a wide variety of social climates, some of them favoring the static retention of traditional forms, some of them favoring the adaptation of the traditional to suit the needs of emerging conditions. Whatever the scenario, it is indisputable that Hispanic oral tradition in the United States is an explosion of vernacular tradition giving the lie to the melting-pot version of U. S. social history. With U. S. Latinos poised to become the largest minority group in the United States

within the current decade, it is likely that the oral traditions discussed in this essay will serve as the foundation for an expansion of unimaginable proportions. As the United States comes to accept and celebrate its status as the most heterogeneous gathering of Western Hemisphere populations, Hispanic oral tradition should attain a national prominence in keeping with the vitality of the human communities that nurture it.

Mexican American Oral Traditions

Americans of Mexican descent, the Chicanos or Mexican-Americans, were of course the first European inhabitants of much of the area they now occupy within the United States. Their oral tradition cannot be viewed as an immigrant tradition, yet history has conspired to make them strangers in their own land, alienated (until recently) from the venues of political and administrative power. Chicano oral tradition reveals a grounding in a sense of territory and a remarkable capacity to assimilate contact with Anglo institutions into a thoroughly Mexican worldview. Different conditions have produced different responses in the various regions of the Mexican diaspora in the United States. Texas, New Mexico and Colorado, Arizona and California can be thought of as three strains, each with its own specific textures and tonalities.

Américo Paredes (1976) has coined the term "greater Mexico" to encompass the numerous tendrils of the Mexican ethos that have established a base outside the political boundaries of Mexico. Greater Mexico includes all those far-flung Chicano communities that have developed as people of Mexican origin sought economic opportunity in the cities and towns of Mexico's neighbors to the north. In cities such as Detroit, New York and Chicago, in the towns of western Oregon, Idaho and Massachusetts, and in countless other sites around the country, people from Mexico or from the border communities have established a foothold and in the process expanded the territorial dominion of Hispanic oral tradition.

A comprehensive survey of the oral forms that flourish in the Chicano homeland, the Southwest of the United States, and that have accompanied Mexican Americans in their journeys northwards is beyond the scope of the present essay. Instead I will attempt to deal with a few of the major genres in some depth: the ballads, folktales and proverbs that circulate principally among adults, and the riddles, rhymes and spooky stories that belong to the culture of childhood. The coverage of these selected forms in selected settings will give a fair picture of the vitality of oral tradition within the context of the modern Chicano experience.

The Ballad of Greater Mexico

The history of the Chicanos, their destiny in the land of the gringos, is presented in this grass-roots chronicle, composed from the vantage point of the common man. Scholars such as Merle Simmons (1957) and Jean Meyer (1976) have demonstrated the close relationship between the turbulent history of modern Mexico and this voice of popular narrative, and the same relationship can be traced in the case of the Mexican-American communities of the United States. The corrido is a ballad form ultimately derived from the Spanish *romance* but adapted to the climate and character of Mexico, where it took root and has flourished over the last one hundred years or so.

It is a well-established (if somewhat mysterious) fact that the great ballad tradition of the Spanish peninsula, the romance, achieved its most fluent New World expression in the corrido tradition that has evolved in Mexico since the latter half of the nineteenth century. From the writers of the Chronicles, we know that the old store of Spanish balladry was on the lips of the conquistadors as they encountered the wonders of ancient Mexican civilization. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1694), loyal witness of the conquest of what was to become Nueva España and later, Mexico, cites a number of dramatic moments and incidents that brought lines from the "old romances" to the minds of Hernán Cortés and the soldiers in his retinue. The Spanish romance authority Ramón Menéndez Pidal views these instances as part of a general pattern:

Seguramente en la memoria de cada capitán, de cada soldado, de cada negociante, iba algo del entonces popularísimo romancero español, que como recuerdo de la infancia reverdecería a menudo para endulzar el sentimiento de soledad de la patria, para distraer el aburrimiento de los inacabables viajes o el temor de las aventuras con que brindaba el desconocido mundo que pisaban." (16)

(Surely in the memory of every captain, of every soldier, of every merchant, went along something of the extremely popular Spanish romancero, a memory from childhood that would have gained strength all the time to sweeten the sentiment of loneliness for the home country, to lessen the boredom of those endless trips or the fear of the adventures awaiting them in the unknown world they set foot on.) [my translation]

There is abundant evidence that this Iberian tradition became firmly established in its New World environment: to this day the occasional romance or fragment thereof can be heard in the towns and villages of many Mexican provinces, and New Mexico and Colorado to boot (Espinosa; Mendoza; Campa). The Mexican corrido derives from this same store of Spanish folk poetry but takes

a radically different evolutionary path: after a period of hiatus (perhaps an artifact of gaps in the historical record), it emerges in the mid-nineteenth century as a vibrant tradition of folk poetry founded on the model of the old romances, but adjusted to the climate and times of the singers and their audiences. This tradition climaxes during the period of Anglo-Mexican border strife and later during the Mexican Revolution as a ballad form intimately wedded to the destiny of the Mexican people. Américo Paredes, the great authority on these matters, characterizes the dramatic emergence of the Mexican corrido from the residue of the Spanish romance as an instance of the formation of a ballad tradition. He writes of "a crystallization of those survivals at one particular time and place into a whole ballad corpus, which by its very weight impresses itself on the consciousness of the people who cultivate it, owing its pervasiveness to the fact that it shapes the way of life or reflects the character of that people (1963, 231). What emerges in the nineteenth century, and climaxes during the period of Anglo-Mexican border strife and later during the Mexican Revolution, is something quite remarkable: a folk poetry founded on the model of the old romances, but now adjusted to the climate and times of the singers and their audiences.

The Mexican corrido apparently takes its name from one rather late version of the Spanish ballad, known as the romance corrido, or 'through-sung ballad.' The term corrido is found throughout much of Spanish America, and can be traced to Spain. The ballad collector Agustín Durán tells us that "en Andalucía, con el nombre de corrió o corrido o carrerilla llama la gente del campo a los romances que conserva por tradición" (in Andalucía, the country people call the romances that they conserve in their tradition by the name of *corrió* or *carrerilla*). "The modern corrido is a thriving continuation of the European ballad tradition, much like the British ballad in its heyday, with new ballads being composed and performed on the topic of striking local and regional events. Corridos are sung in the homes, cantinas, and marketplaces of "greater Mexico."

The modern corrido has transformed the sixteen-syllable line of the Spanish romance into a pair of eight-syllable lines, and stacked these together into stanzas of four or six lines. Assonance or increasingly consonance is observed between the final syllables of even-numbered lines. Corridos generally begin and end with a meta-narrative frame, that is, with discourse that reaches beyond the story to allude to the singing occasion itself. Most often the song begins with a cordial invitation to the auditors, and it ends with a *despedida*, a formulaic leavetaking on the part of the singer. Plot details are quickly laid in place, the time and setting of the events, the identities of the participants, so that the singer can focus on the alleged words exchanged by protagonists as they are challenged by mortal dangers.

Apart from solo recitations, corrido performances re-

quire musical accompaniment, minimally a single guitar, but possibly encompassing an entire musical conjunto, or ensemble. The norteño sound, with its chord-slapping rhythm guitar and accordion melody, has become a familiar vehicle of corrido performance throughout greater Mexico. Corridos are composed and performed by regional and local bands, as well as by amateur musicians in the Mexican-American community. They are frequently disseminated by records and cassettes marketed within the Mexican-American community, and they can be heard over the air waves in those places serviced by Spanish-language programming.

After its initial emergence in the mid-nineteenth century, the corrido gradually became a national balladry, depicting the events that engulfed people in the great crossroads of Mexican history. This portrait of history emerges from the viewpoint of the common people, and not from the official record or sophisticated overview of the learned historian. And so the corpus of corridos from the revolutionary period offers an inimitable vision of the impact of these events on the families and villages of Mexico; and the corpus of corridos from the Texas-Mexican border zone displays the fierce determination of the mexicano caught in a desperate economic struggle with the Anglo invader.

Américo Paredes cites the border corrido, born in the clash of cultures and aspirations along the Mexican-United States border, as a harbinger of the revival of this dormant narrative form in greater Mexico (1957). Corridos were composed and performed along the border in response to inter-cultural conflict as the Anglo population asserted its economic and political dominance over the region. Typically the border corridos celebrate Mexican culture and its heroes, placing special emphasis on the man who stands up for his rights in the face of outside aggression, often perpetrated by the infamous Texas Rangers.

Paredes has provided excellent documentation of one particularly interesting case, that of Gregorio Cortez, a Mexican-American rancher who was dragged into skirmishes with the law (1958). Gregorio Cortez killed one sheriff and wounded another, evaded the authorities for a period of time and finally fell into their hands for trial. Amazingly enough, he was acquitted of the major charges against him and finally convicted of a minor one. Cortez quickly became a symbol of the oppressed Texas Mexican, and numerous versions of his story were transmitted through legends and corridos passed along within the community.

The corridos about Gregorio Cortez contain stanzas that exhibit the prevailing attitude towards the process of cultural contact in the region:

(1)

Decía Gregorio Cortez

con su alma muy encendida:
—No siento haberlo matado
la defensa es permitida.

(2)

Decía Gregorio Cortez
abrochándose un zapato:
—Aquí traigo más cartuchos
pa' divertirlos un rato. [sic]

(3)

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
—Ah cuanto rinche cobarde
para un solo mexicano.

[1]

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
And his soul was all aflame,
"I don't regret that I killed him;
A man must defend himself."

[2]

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
As he was tying his shoe,
"I have more cartridges left
To entertain you a while."

[3]

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
With his pistol in his hand,
"Ah, how many cowardly rangers
against one lone Mexican.")

These stanzas, all taken from the collection by Paredes (1958), indicate the spirit of the genre in this setting. The first of them, performed by Alberto and Fernando Garza, Fernando Rodríguez and Pioquinto Medina, in Brownsville, August of 1954, extols the right of self-defense. The second and third, from a performance by Gil González Cisneros in Las Comas, Tamaulipas in December of 1951, reveal, first, the carefree posture of defiance that is characteristic of the corrido hero, and then the plight of the hero, outnumbered by the cowardly Texas Rangers who always gather in large numbers to do their mischief. In each instance the corrido hero is emblematic of the Mexican-American community, itself beleaguered by the onslaught of Anglo settlers and developers.

The continued popularity of this emblematic song is attested by its presence in the repertory of contemporary Chicano conjuntos. A recent issue of *Sing Out: The Folk*

Song Magazine (vol. 36, #1, Spring 1991) features a version of the song as performed by Los Pingüinos del Norte (Arhoolie CD 311, "Tex-Mex Conjuntos):

Gregorio Cortez

En el condado del Carmen
miren lo que ha sucedido,
murió el Cherife Mayor
quedando Román herido.

Anduvieron informando
como tres horas después,
supieron que el malhechor
era Gregorio Cortez.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
—No siento haberlo matado
lo que siento es a mi hermano.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su alma muy encendida:
—No siento haberlo matado
la defensa es permitida.

Iban los americanos
que por el viento volaban,
porque se iban a ganar
diez mil pesos que les daban.

Al llegar al Encinal
lo alcanzaron a rodear,
poquito más de trescientos
allí les brincó el corral.

Le echaron los perros jaunes
que iban detrás de la huella,
pero alcanzar a Cortez
era alcanzar a una estrella.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
—Pa' qué se valen de planes
si no me pueden pescar
ni con esos perros jaunes?

Gregorio le dice a Juan:
—Muy pronto lo vas a ver,
anda, dile a los cherifes
que me vengan a aprehender.

Dicen que por culpa mía
se ha matado a mucha gente,
yo me voy a presentar
porque esto no es conveniente.

Pues ya Gregorio murió
ya terminó la cuestión,
la pobre de su familia
lo llevan en el corazón.

(In the county of Carmen [Karnes],
Look at what has happened,
The High Sheriff died
Leaving Román wounded.

They went around asking questions
About three hours later,
They found out that the wrongdoer
Was Gregorio Cortez.

Gregorio Cortez was saying
With his pistol in his hand:
"I don't regret having killed him,
The one I'm sorry about is my brother."

Gregorio Cortez was saying
With his soul all ablaze:
"I don't regret having killed him,
Self-defense is permitted."

The Americans were riding,
They were flying down the wind,
Because they were trying to earn
The 10,000 dollars they would be given.

On arriving in Encinal
They succeeded in surrounding him,
Just a few more than 300 of them;
There he jumped out of their corral.

They loosed the hound dogs on him
That were tracking his trail,
But catching up with Cortez
Was like catching up with a star.

Gregorio Cortez was saying:
"What's the use of all your scheming
If you can't even find me,
Not even with these hound dogs?"

Gregorio tells Juan:
"Very soon you will see it;
Go and tell the sheriffs
To come and arrest me."

"They say it's my fault
That many people have been killed;
I'm going to turn myself in
Because this isn't right."

Well Gregorio is already dead,

Now the matter is finished;
His poor family
Carries him in their hearts.)

Gregorio Cortez has been converted into a pan-Hispanic symbol of Latino resistance, first through the scholarly work of Américo Paredes, and more recently through the production of a video that has played several times on national television. The corrido among Mexican-Americans has frequently pursued this mode of resistance, expressing the inconformity of the community to political and economic conditions imposed by the dominant Anglo institutions. During the Chicano movement of the 1960s, meetings and rallies throughout the Southwest and beyond frequently involved performances of corridos from Mexico, preserved from their earlier period of origin but resonant within the contemporary political climate. Undoubtedly the best known of these was "Valentín de la Sierra."

Valentín de la Sierra

Voy a cantar un corrido
de un amigo de mi tierra,
llamábase Valentín
y fue fusilado y colgado en la sierra.

Ni me quisiera acordar
era una tarde de invierno,
cuando por su mala suerte
cayó Valentín en manos del gobierno.

El capitán le pregunta:
"¿Cuál es la gente que mandas?"
"Son ochocientos soldados
que tienen sitiada la hacienda de Holandas."

El coronel le pregunta:
"¿Cuál es la gente que guías?"
"Son ochocientos soldados
que trae por la sierra Mariano Mejías."

El general le decía:
"Yo te concedo el indulto,
pero me vas a decir
cuál es el juzgado y la causa que juzgo."

Valentín como era hombre
de nada les dio razón:
"Yo soy de los meros hombres
que han inventado la revolución."

Antes de llegar al cerro
Valentín quiso llorar:
"Madre mía de Guadalupe
por tu religión me van a matar."

Vuela vuela palomita
párate en aquel fortín,
estas son las mañanitas
de un hombre valiente que fue Valentín.

(I will sing a corrido
about a friend from my land,
he called himself Valentín
and he was shot and hung in the highlands.

I don't even wish to remember
it was a winter afternoon,
when for his misfortune
Valentín fell into the hands of the government.

The captain asked him:
"How large is the troop you command?"
"They are eight-hundred soldiers
who have laid seige to the Holandas hacienda."

The coronel asked him:
"How large is the troop you command?"
"They are eight-hundred soldiers
that Mariano Mejía brings in the highlands."

The general told him:
"I will grant you a pardon,
but you must tell me
who is the accused and the complaint that I
judge."

Valentín since he was a man
he gave them no information at all:
"I am one of the very men
who have invented the revolution."

Before arriving at the hilltop
Valentín wanted to cry:
"My Mother, Virgin of Guadalupe
for your religion they are going to kill me."

Fly, fly little dove
perch on that little fort over there,
this is the lament
for that brave man who was Valentín.)

The appeal of this song, which is historically displaced from the little-known events of the Cristero movement, a peasant rebellion ostensibly about church-state relations but fundamentally about access to land (McDowell), lies in the bold defiance of the hero, his claim with regard to "inventing the revolution," and the rehearsal of symbols of Mexican identity such as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Chicano activists of the 1960s could relate the plight of the hero in the song to their own quest for recognition in the face of an unfriendly Anglo establishment.

The theme of social and political protest became promi-

nent in the struggle of the Mexican-American farmworkers to achieve basic economic rights through union organization, a struggle that continues to this day. The Teatro Campesino, which began as improvisatory theater aimed at rallying farmworkers by dramatizing their problems, incorporated the corrido as a major vehicle of political protest, thereby tapping into a pre-existing channel for contemplating events affecting Mexican-American communities. Many other Chicano theater groups have drawn on this same resource (Kanellos). In these settings the corrido was self-consciously utilized by political activists in the service of *La Causa*.

A beautiful example of the vitality of the genre in the Mexican-American consciousness is the "Corrido de Schenley" (1976). Directed against the grape producers of this liquor industry, the corrido was spontaneously composed by a group of protesters who were arrested and held together in the Bakersfield jail. Pablo Saludado provides this description:

Andábamos haciendo demostración alrededor de las viñas cuando ... los policías nos subieron a los carros y nos llevaron a la cárcel en Bakersfield. Pos, pasando el tiempo, para pasar el tiempo, un poco allí en la cárcel, nos juntamos entre todos, unos pusimos uno, dos, tres palabras, otros un verso y compusimos el corrido que le nombramos *Corrido de Schenley*.

(We were demonstrating around the vineyards when ... the police put us in the cars and took us to jail in Bakersfield. Well, in order to pass the time there in jail, we all got together: some added one, two, or three words, others a verse, and we wrote the ballad that we call *The Ballad of Schenley*. [Trans. Hildebrando Villarreal, Mary MacGregor-Villarreal, Michael Heisley].)

The text evinces the power of simple, direct corrido language:

Corrido de Schenley

Señores voy a cantarles
lo que en Delano ha pasado,
que en los ranchos del White River
Fuimos varios arrestados.

Nos llevaron de Delano
a la cárcel del condado,
porque quebramos la orden
que el juez nos había dado.

Fue en septiembre veinte-cinco
que todos recordarán,
decidimos los huelguistas

a esos files entrar.

Nosotros lo que queríamos
con esquiroles hablar,
que no quebraran la huelga
y fueran a otro lugar.

Pablo López empezó
a meterse con la gente,
y dijo llegando allí:
"Les encargo que se sienten."

Llegamos a ese lugar
que Pablo nos indicó,
cada quien con su bandera
que nunca la separó.

Al pie de nuestra bandera
símbolo de nuestra unión,
decíamos, "Viva la causa
por todita la nación."

Como a las dos de la tarde
del día antes mencionado,
en los carros del cherife
nos llevaron esposados.

Las mujeres son valientes
y grandes de corazón,
gritaban, "Que viva Chávez
el líder de nuestra unión."

Les pedimos su criterio
y gracias por su atención,
estos versos compusimos
adentro de la prisión.

(Gentlemen, I am going to sing to you
About what happened in Delano,
That on the White River farms
Several of us were arrested.

They took us from Delano
To the county jail
Because we violated the order
That the judge had given us.

It was on September 25
That everyone will remember
We, the strikers, decided
To enter these fields.

What we wanted was
To talk to the scabs,
To ask them not to break the strike,
And to go to another place.

Pablo López began
To mix with the people,
And upon arriving there he said,
"Let's sit down."

We arrived at that place
That Pablo indicated to us,
Each one with his banner
With which we never parted.

At the foot of our flag,
Symbol of our union,
We said, "Long live the Cause
Throughout the whole nation."

About two in the afternoon
Of the day already mentioned
They took us away handcuffed
In the sheriff's cars.

The women are brave
And of great heart.
They shouted, "Long live Chávez,
The leader of our union!"

We ask your judgment
And thank you for your attention;
We composed these verses
Inside the prison. [Trans. Villarreal, Heisley]]

The corrido among Mexican-Americans has been exclusively an instrument of political protest. Corridos have been composed and performed to commemorate natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornados, and they are sometimes devoted to expressing a Chicano viewpoint of current events affecting the entire nation, such as the assassinations of the Kennedys and of Martin Luther King. It can be argued, by virtue of its ubiquity and the diversity of its content, that the corrido has served the Mexican-American community in the United States as a shared cultural instrument for probing the complications and limits inherent in the historical destiny of this community.

The corrido, although one of the most important forms of expressive culture the Mexican American population has developed, is not by any means the only genre popular throughout the Hispanic United States. The *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* provides us with a basic guideline vis-à-vis the various Mexican American folklore genres extant in North America. These include: (1) prose narratives (myths, folktales, legends, memorates, [personal experience stories], *casos* [events], jests); (2) folksongs (ballads, *canciones* [songs], *décimas*, *coplas*); (3) folk speech; (4) proverbs and proverbial expressions; (5) folk drama; (6) children's songs and games; (7) riddles; (8) beliefs and folk medicine; (9) folk festivals; (10) folk arts and crafts; (11) folk dance; and (12) folk

gestures. In this study we focus on the first eight genres subsumed under the category of literary folklore.

Prose Narrative—*María Herrera-Sobek*

The categories subsumed under the broad umbrella of "prose narratives" include myths, folktales, legends, *casos*, memorates and jests. There are no "true" Chicano myth narratives as such; myths evidenced in Chicano literature derived mainly from Aztec and Mayan sources. These myths proved vitally important in the Chicanos' quest for self definition and in their search for identity since the turbulent sixties decade. It should not be surprising that Aztec myths found fertile ground in the creative thought processes of Chicanos who having been denied their Indian heritage in previous eras suddenly felt a renovated affiliation with that heritage. Thus, a new political meaning was grafted into the old myth of Aztlán, the land of the Chicanos' mythic Aztec ancestors who dwelled in what became the American Southwest before migrating south to Tenochtitlan (Mexico City).

Early Chicano political activists and creative writers renovated these Aztec myths in their quest for a reaffirmation of their centuries-old roots in America. These myths became an important element in their search for a sense of identity which they perceived to be not wholly Mexican, not wholly American, but Chicano. *Lo indio, lo azteca, lo maya* (that which is Indian, Aztec, Maya) was no longer a source of embarrassment or something to be ashamed of, but a source of pride. Through the fascinating myths of the ancients, one could perceive that brown was indeed beautiful. Alurista, one of the most prominent poets of the Chicano literary renaissance, liberally sprinkles his verse with the themes of Quetzalcóatl, priest-god of the Toltecs; Kukulcán, Mayan god; Coatlicue, an Aztec mother goddess; and many other Aztec and Mayan deities to effectively convey this new found pride.

The folktale, on the other hand, bears the stamp of both an Indian and a Spanish heritage and is a rich source of Chicano folklore. The European-Spanish heritage surfaces in the fairytale or *märchen* type of narratives. "María Cenicienta" (Cinderella), "Caperucita Roja" (Little Red Riding Hood), "Blancanieves" (Snow White), "The Little Horse of Seven Colors," "Juan y las habichuelas" (Jack and the Beanstalk), and others of this type are obviously of European origin, having migrated with the Spaniards to the New World. It was inevitable, however, that contact with a large Indian population would eventually produce a syncretism of European tales with Native American ones. In addition, a significant number of Meso-American Indian tales integrated themselves into the general Mexican and Mexican American folktale repertoire. Thus, an important number of animal tales such as those pertaining to the coyote cycle originate from Native American stock.

A similar statement can be formulated for the leg-

ends. Although many came from Europe, particularly the religious legends, a good number derive from Meso-American Indian lore. Others demonstrate a decided syncretism in the type of motifs found in their structural framework. A good example of this process is evident in the "La Llorona" legend.

Bacil F. Kirtley in his excellent article, "La Llorona and Related Themes," does a credible tracing of La Llorona's (Weeping woman) ancestry to both Germanic and Aztec cultural traditions (155-68). Basically, he cites the existence of a Llorona-type legend as first appearing in Germany "by at least 1486" as "Die Weisse Frau" (E425.1.1) and recorded in writing by the poet Kaspar Brushchius in his *Chronologia Monasteriorum Germaniae Praecipuorum* in 1552 and printed at Sulzback in 1682 (157). A second source of input contributing to the development of La Llorona, according to this same author, was the Aztec legends surrounding the Goddess Cihuacóatl (Snake Woman) who was "Among the earth goddesses the most famous . . . and whose voice, roaring through the night, betokened war" (163-64).

As might be expected, a controversy exists between those scholars espousing a Mexican origin and those that lean towards both Aztec and European influences. Those supporting an Aztec heritage generally base their theory (as Kirtley did) on such impeccable sources as Sahagún who in his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (General History of Things from New Spain, Book I, Chapter IV) described the Goddess Cihuacóatl in the following manner: "Cihuacóatl appeared several times a year as a well-dressed woman. It was said she would cry out and howl at night . . . Her clothing was white and her long hair was braided in such a manner as to appear like horns sticking out of her forehead" (*Leyendas y sucesidos del México colonial* 12). Furthermore, Sahagún lists in Book XI the different omens that foreshadowed the downfall of the great Aztec Empire. Omen number six predicted: "At night you will hear the anguished wailing of a woman who cries: 'Oh, my sons, your destruction is near'" (12). On other occasions she will cry: "Oh my sons! Where shall I take you so that you will not perish?" (12).

Although controversy exists with respect to the La Llorona's origins, there is no hesitancy on the part of scholars to acknowledge similarities between this legend and other Weeping woman-type legends. For example, many perceive a strong resemblance between La Llorona and the Hebrew Lilith. Lilith, according to tradition, was the first wife of Adam (*Gen. i., 27*) and was created simultaneously with man. Because of this simultaneous creation, Lilith refused to acknowledge Adam as her superior and was subsequently expelled from paradise. She reportedly cohabited with the Devil and gave birth to the jinn, or evil spirits. Her refusal to return to Adam brought upon the wrath of God who condemned her to lose one hundred of her progeny each day (*Funk & Wagnalls* 622).

In addition to Lilith and Lamia, several other Weep-

ing woman legends are found among North American peoples. The Penobscot Indians, for example, have the Pskegdemus legend:

Pskegdemus . . . is a swamp spirit who wails near camps to entice men and children. A man who shows any sympathy for her, even in thought is lost, for he will never be satisfied to marry a human woman. Another such demon of the Penobscot, dress in moss and cedar bark, likes children and pets them. But good-willed though she be, children have a way of going to sleep forever where she fondles them. (622)

Other Mesoamerican Indian myths that share similarities with La Llorona apart from the Cihuacóatl myth include: the Ciuateteo (or Ciuapipltin) whom the Aztecs believed to be:

. . . certain female spirits (literally "noble women") who had died in childbirth (or in their first childbirth) or who had been warriors. Their patroness was Cihuacóatl, the serpent woman, probably an aspect of Coatlicue. The Ciuateteo lived in the western sky, through which, from the time it reached the meridian, they carried the sun to deliver it to the lords of the underworld. From this connection with the underworld they probably derived their dangerous character. Sometimes they flew out of the west as eagles, bring epilepsy to children and lust to men. At certain times they scared people on the roads Under Spanish influence, the Ciuateteo has developed into La Llorona, the weeping woman of folktale, who wanders through the streets seeking her lost children. (*Ibid* 236)

Further studies such as Michael Kearney's "La Llorona as a Social Symbol" show that "a variant of La Llorona occurs in Ixtepeji (Zapotec mestizo town in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca, México) bearing the name Matlaziwa. Matlaziwa is a spirit-being who is similar enough to La Llorona so that informants tend to equate them. Everyone knows of them and many people report having heard, seen and having had direct encounter with them" (200). A counterpart of Matlacíhuatl, as pointed out by Elaine Miller in her *Mexican Folk Narratives from the Los Angeles Area*, 1975, is Xtabay, who is also a siren-type Llorona (65).

Another interesting group of legends reported from the state of Veracruz bears a close resemblance to this "siren-type" Llorona. These legends are those related to the "Chanecas" who are: "women living in the forest who try to get a traveller to lose his path so that they may live with him, have sexual relations with him and eventually kill him" (Boggs 1939, #1099).

With respect to literary versions found in Mexico and the Southwest, Betty Leddy in "La Llorona in Southern Arizona" cites various adaptations of the legends into other literary genres such as the novel, drama and poetry (272). Two literary versions consulted depict the life-history of La Llorona. The first, a long poem by Vicente Riva Palacio and Juan de Dios Peza details the tragic love affair of Luisa with an aristocrat who abandons her to marry someone from his own class. The anguished Luisa, beside herself from grief, stabs the children to death (79-95). The second literary version appears in a collection entitled *Leyendas y sucesos del México colonial* (1963). The legends in this collection are literary versions of popular narratives from Mexico. This Llorona, written by Artemio del Valle Arizpe, is actually a summary of various versions from Mexico City. The principal variations recounted include:

1. La Llorona had been a woman deeply in love with her husband but lived far away from him. When she tried to join him, he was married to someone else.
2. She was a woman who actually never married her fiancé because she died before their wedding and now returns to gaze at her beloved and cries upon seeing the wicked life he is living.
3. Others attest she was a widow with children living in poverty.
4. She was the mother of murdered children and came back to mourn them.
5. She was an unfaithful wife who returned crying for forgiveness.
6. She was a woman who was murdered by her jealous husband over unfounded suspicions.
7. She was doña Marina, the beautiful Malinche mistress of Cortés who came back to earth crying for forgiveness for having betrayed her race to the Spaniards. (*Ibid* 7-12)

Chicano Llorona legends generally fall within three categories as suggested by Leddy in her articles cited previously: (1) the siren, (2) the grieving woman and (3) the woman dangerous to children (277). In addition, Chicano legends also include the types posited by Fernando Horcasitas Pimentel who has also done extensive studies on La Llorona: (1) The woman condemned by God for killing her children, (2) Malinche, Cortés' mistress, and supposed betrayer of her race and (3) Matlacíhuatl, seducer of men (Miller 63).

Numerous Chicano Llorona legends yield two basic structural patterns: (1) La Llorona is a beautiful but lower-class girl who meets an aristocratic man (a king, duke, count, etc.) and falls in love with him. Her lover decides to marry another woman from his own class. La

Llorona, either for (a) vengeance or (b) because she fears he will take away her children, kills them. She realizes the consequences of her horrible deed and goes insane, forever condemned to search fruitlessly for her lost progeny. (2) The second pattern basically depicts the same sequence of events as the first except that the racial characteristics of the female protagonist changes from ostensibly Spanish to that of Indian. La Llorona in these versions is an Indian and her wayward lover is a Spaniard (personal collection of La Llorona legends from Orange County, California).

It is in this second type that the historical names of Cortés and Malinche appear. The basic kernel of betrayal by her lover plus the horrible act of killing her children remains throughout the biographical legends. The differences extant in the various texts seem to reside in the manner La Llorona chooses to execute her offspring. Following are the several ways this tragic deed was accomplished: (1) stabbing; (2) drowning; (3) throws them in a hole; (4) unspecified manner.

In the anecdotal type versions (as opposed to the literary type variants), La Llorona appears as a scary entity either to the person relating the tale or to someone close to (an uncle, brother, etc.). The form La Llorona usually takes is that of a woman. In some of these legends only the terrifying wail is heard. The appearance of La Llorona in the tales recounted is commonly associated with some form of transgression: i.e. male coming home drunk; married male trying to pick up a woman; child misbehaving or disobeying orders. The geographic place where she appears varies depending on the narrator: she may appear by a canal, by a certain stone at the crossroads of a town, by the railroad tracks, by his/her house, near a tree, etc.

Common motifs found in La Llorona legends include:

E587.5.	Ghosts walk at midnight
E547	The dead wail
E425.2.2	Revenant as man with horse's head
C3ll.1.1.	Tabu: looking at ghosts
S131.	Murder by drowning
Q211.4	Murder of children punished
Q503.	Wandering after death as punishment
E265.1.	Meeting ghost causes sickness
E266	Dead carry off living
E425.1.1.	Revenant as lady in white
H1219.2	Quest assigned as punishment for murder
Q520.1	Murderer does penance
G264	La Belle Dame Sans Merci (The Beautiful Maiden Without Mercy)
C943	Loss of sight from breaking tabu
D791.	Disenchantment possible under unique conditions
G261	Witch steals children

Socio-Political and Cultural Implications

In attempting to formulate an explanation for La Llorona's popularity within the Chicano community, one has to take into consideration the socio-historical and political reality of Mexican Americans in Anglo American society as mentioned previously. In the Chicanos' quest for self-definition during the politically active decades of the 1960s and 1970s, they have searched back in time and found inspiration and pride in their Indian ancestral roots. The ancient Aztec, Toltec and other Mesoamerican myths have come alive for the contemporary Chicano(a). They have found in the myths of Aztlán, of Quetzalcóatl and other ancient gods and goddesses, a link between the past and the present. Lost in a maze of labels such as Mexican American, Spanish American, Latin American, Hispanic, Latino, and other even less palatable names, they have begun a quest for self-definition. This existential journey has taken them to the pre-Columbian myths and legends of the Aztec-Mexica and it is here that they have found their Indian mother, La Llorona. La Llorona becomes a symbolic figure representing the Chicano's feeling of alienation and loss of identity. As Rafael Grajeda states in his incisive analysis of "The Figure of the Pocho in Contemporary Chicano Fiction," "The Chicano is the 'marginal man,' the *huérfano* (the 'orphan')—another outsider in the society. Ideologically and psychologically botched through his assimilation of the collective unconscious of an American culture which charges him with the burden of being unworthy, and incapable of 'going back' to Mexico, the pocho is the man in cultural limbo" (1).

La Llorona is perceived as a Wailing Mother in search of her orphaned children; her lost children, in turn, are looking for her. As such, she becomes an important recurring motif in the literature of Chicano(a)s as evidenced in the writings of different Chicano authors. La Llorona appears in such important Mexican American poets and novelists as Alurista, Alejandro Morales, Rudolfo Anaya and Raúl Salinas.

In Alurista's poetry for example, La Llorona appears as a mother looking for her lost children in the mechanical labyrinths of United States industry. In a poem entitled "must be the season of the witch" Alurista exclaims:

Must be the season of the witch
 la bruja [the witch]
 la llorona
 she lost her children
 and she cries
 en las barrancas of industry [in the canyons]
 her children
 devoured by computers
 and the gears
 Must be the season of the witch
 I hear huesos crack [bones]
 in pain
 y lloros [cries]

la bruja pangs
 sus hijos han olvidado [her sons have forgot-
 ten]
 la magia de Durango [the magic of Durango]
 y la de Moctezuma [and Moctezuma's]
 —el Huiclamina
 Must be the season of the witch
 La bruja llora [the witch cries]
 sus hijos sufren; sin ella [her offspring suffer
 without her] (26)

In Alejandro Morales's first novel, *Caras viejas y vino nuevo* (Old Faces and New Wine 1975), the motif of La Llorona serves to emphasize the barrio's loss of her children to drugs, police, illness. The novel depicts barrio life in the 1950s and 1960s in its most grotesque, degraded and violent conditions. The constant fights and the poor health, both spiritual and physical, of the inhabitants of that area bring the mechanical cries of the sirens of an ambulance, a fire engine or the police. It is the wail of La Llorona who comes to take the "children," her sons and daughters, away. After the death of the mother of one of the main characters we read: "The cold wind wandered through the empty space and La Llorona in her mournful journey played and carressed the trees. Her cry could be heard throughout the barrio because of what she saw. The fingertips dried the eyes but she continued crying" (14).

Similarly, La Llorona plays an important part in the structure of Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), an outstanding Chicano novel. Jane Rogers in her penetrating article, "The Function of the La Llorona Motif in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*," analyzes the La Llorona motif in his first novel. She posits that the La Llorona motif figures both on a literal mythological level and as an integral part of Antonio's [the protagonist] life. "As 'literal' myth, la llorona is the wailing woman of the river. Hers is the 'tormented cry of lonely goddess' that fills the valley in one of Antonio's dreams. La Llorona is 'the old witch who cries along the river banks and seeks the blood of boys and men to drink'" (64).

As is evident, La Llorona has played and continues to play a significant role in the creative process of Chicano(a) writers: for these writers, be they poets or novelists, in search of their "roots" or their identity, have traveled back in time and found in childhood memories, in myths and legends, the figure of La Llorona. The legend never dead, has taken a new meaning for Chicanos who frequently feel alienated and lost in American society. The connection between "lost children" and Chicanos living in the United States away from the Mexican "mother culture" is instantly seen by perceptive writers and is felt subconsciously by the rest of this ethnic population.

Américo Paredes has commented on the function of legends in a people's psycho-sociocultural structures in his article "Mexican Legendry and the Rise of the

Mestizo":

For my purposes, then, legends are ego-supporting devices. They may appeal to the group or to individuals by affording them pride, dignity and self-esteem: local or national heroes to identify with, for example, or place-name legends giving an aura of importance to some familiar and undistinguished feature of the local landscape. Whether in doing so they validate or challenge the social structure, ease tensions or exacerbate them, is beside the point. One may feel his ego just as well with frustration and defeat as with victory and conformity. Legends, however, are important in providing symbols that embody the social aspirations of the group, whether these be embodied in an ideal status quo or in dreams of revolution. (91)

Paredes further explains the usefulness of legends in exploring the character of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Paredes further proposes that the "rise of the mestizo as representative of the Mexican nationality may be illuminated by the study of Mexican legendry" (98). He also observes that before the "rise of the mestizo" (pre-nineteenth-century Mexico), legends dealt generally with supernatural, miraculous events such as the apparition of saints. As the mestizo seized power, legend content leaned toward the recounting of the deeds of flesh-and-blood heroes such as Heraclio Bernal, Gregorio Cortez and later, during the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the deeds and actions of the revolutionary heroes such as Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco I. Madero and others (97-107).

There are several scholars who have undertaken extensive research on the Mexican/Chicano legend and the folktale. Juan Rael published a large collection of tales from Colorado. Stanley L. Robe did ample research on tales and legends from various parts of Mexico and the Southwest. Elaine Miller published a collection of folktales from the Los Angeles area titled *Mexican Folk Narrative from the Los Angeles Area* (1973). Her collection includes religious narratives such as "La Virgen de Talpa" and "El Santo Niño de Atocha," devil narratives, and the return of the dead, that is, legends depicting the apparition of dead persons. Another very popular type included in Miller's collection is the dead person that returns to pay a *manda* (promise) to some saint. Miller has examples of buried treasure legends, tales about *duendes* (spirits), as well as traditional tales (animal tales, tales of magic, stupid ogre tales and others).

Recently, scholars are grappling with the new concepts of *caso* and *memorate*. These new terms are designed to meet the ever-increasing problem of defining in more precise terms the large corpus of prose narrative present in all cultures. More and more scholars are realizing that

the old terminology (folktale, legend, *märchen*) is inadequate and too broadly based to meet the needs of rigorous scientific analysis. The terms *caso*, *memorate*, and personal experience narratives are currently used to classify a large body of narratives extant in Mexican/Chicano folklore. The above terms generally encompass narratives that happened to the informant or to someone the informant knows. Joe Graham provides the following definition: "[a *caso* is] a relatively brief prose narrative, focusing upon a single event, supernatural or natural, in which the protagonist or observer is the narrator or someone the narrator knows and vouches for, and which is normally used as evidence or as an example to illustrate that 'this kind of thing happens' (19). Graham offers fourteen types of *casos* discernible by their theme and structure in Chicano folklore. The following is an example:

Caso Type 1

A Mexican American becomes ill and is taken to a doctor, who either treats him, with no visible results, or says that the person is not ill. The person is taken to a *curandero* or folk practitioner, who provides the proper remedy, and the patient gets well. (31)

These new areas of endeavor in folklore, such as the *caso*, *memorate*, and personal experience narrative, illustrate the richness and complexity of Mexican/Chicano culture.

An equally significant area of folklore is the *chiste* or jest. Again, Américo Paredes undertook seminal research in this genre and provided a theoretical construct for understanding the underlying basis of much of Chicano folklore in general, and Chicano jokes in particular. Paredes' basic thesis underscores the element of cultural conflict as the principal moving force generating Chicano folklore (1968).

Much of Chicano humor derives from the confrontation of two cultures: one Mexican, Catholic, Spanish-speaking; the other Anglo, Protestant, English-speaking. A large corpus of jokes, for example, relies on Mexican-Anglo conflicts using the linguistic differences between the two cultures as points of departure. Notice the following:

A gringo was travelling on a rural Mexican road in his Cadillac when suddenly a man and his burro block his path. The gringo gets down from his car, takes off his glove, and slaps the Mexican in the face with the glove yelling, "Sono-fabitch!" Whereupon the Mexican takes off his huarache, slaps the gringo in the face and yells, "B. F. Goodrich!" (Meza Fuentes, student term paper, University of California, Irvine, California, 1980)

In the above jest, although the Mexican does not understand the insult, he manages to outsmart the Anglo by striking the hardest blow. It is typical of Chicano humor in general that the Mexican/Chicano protagonist comes out the best in the exchange.

There is a cycle of jokes, however, where the protagonist (a Mexican immigrant) is the butt of the joke. This cycle of jokes portrays the difficulties newly arrived Mexicans have due to the differences in language. A good example of this type of joke follows:

A recently arrived immigrant sees a door with the sign: FOR SALE NOT FOR LEASE. He goes to the door and begins struggling to open it. A policeman comes along and asks him what he is doing to which the immigrant replies: "Pues el letrero dice que 'Forsale no lease.'" ["Fórzale no le hace." Meaning "Force it; it does not matter."] (*Ibid*)

The joke resides on the play on words between the Spanish word "fórzale" and the English phrase "For sale" and the nonstandard Spanish expression "no le ase" ("no le hace").

This type of joke continue to appear. Recently a joke was circulating with the word "Latina." There has been a controversy among Latin Americans and Mexican Americans regarding the use of the word "Latino/a" and "Hispanic" as an all encompassing word to designate all Spanish surname groups. "Hispanic" seems to be the preferred racial category used by the United States government whereas "Latino" seems to be more acceptable to a large number of Latin Americans. Chicanos on the other hand prefer the term "Chicano" or "Mexican American." The joke was told at a meeting where a heated discussion over what term to use for purposes of a major research endeavor:

The Border Patrol sees a Chicana crossing the U. S.-Mexican border. They approach her and ask her "Latina?" Whereupon the woman answers: "No. La Tina ya cruzó. Yo soy La Molly." ["No. 'La Tina' already crossed over. I am 'La Molly.' "] (Informant: Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, University of New Mexico, May 1991).

A second basic factor that characterizes many Chicano jokes is the bilingualism expressed within the jokes as evidenced in the examples given above. Many Chicano jokes require an understanding of both Spanish and English due the fact that the structure of the jokes utilizes the misunderstanding of one or both languages to deliver its intended humor and punch line.

Folk Speech

Chicano Spanish has recently been the focus of intense study, particularly by linguists and those interested in bilin-

gual education. The realization by American schools and by linguists that the Spanish spoken in the Southwest differed markedly from that spoken in Spain, Mexico, and other Latin-American countries, led to a flurry of research. The most comprehensive bibliography on Chicano speech is Richard V. Teschner, Garland D. Bills and Jerry R. Craddock's *Spanish and English of United States Hispanos: A Critical, Annotated, Linguistic Bibliography* (1975), which cites 675 items. The most fruitful work undertaken is on the aspect of code-switching, (switching in the middle of a phrase, sentence, or paragraph from English to Spanish or vice versa), but the most outstanding area of research from a folklorist's point of view has been neglected. Thus, little in-depth research is available on *caló* (the jargon of the underworld or the *pachuco*) or other areas of folk speech. A seminal work by George C. Baker "Pachuco: An American-Spanish Argot and Its Social Function in Tucson, Arizona" (1975) is still one of the best works in the field. Baker studied the speech of *pachucos* from Tucson and related this speech to the social function it played within the in-group and the out-group. Some of these words include: *carnal* (brother), *jaina* (girlfriend) *chante* (house), *ruka* (girl), *birreía* (beer), *canton* (house), *chale* (no), *lisa* (shirt) *simón* (yes) and *refinar* (to eat). The lack of studies in this genre is indeed deplorable. José Limón, a specialist in folklore, has amply demonstrated the importance of this area in his article "The Folk Performance of 'Chicano' and the Cultural Limits of Political Ideology." Limón analyzes the failure of the folk term Chicano to gain widespread acceptance in the community and posits the thesis that "in part this failure may be attributed to the unintentional violation of the community's rules about the socially appropriate use of the term—rules keyed on the community's definition of the performance of the term as belonging to the folklore genres of nicknaming and ethnic slurs" (197). It is fairly easy to deduce from this study that if political movements are to succeed, the leaders of these movements must have an intimate and working knowledge of the people they propose to represent. One way to accomplish this is through an in-depth understanding of the cultural vectors (such as folklore) operative in the community.

Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions

Proverbs and proverbial expressions, entities intimately related to folk speech, form an integral part of Chicano folklore. Although used most frequently by the older generation, a recent study undertaken by Shirley Arora (43–69) demonstrates that the younger generations of Chicanos are indeed aware of proverbs, having been raised by a mother, father or other family members who interspersed their speech with these colorful expressions.

A proverb may be defined as a short, succinct expression that encompasses within its words a philosophical wisdom. Examples include:

1. Tanto va el cántaro al agua hasta que se quiebra. [A jar that keeps going to the water fountain will eventually break.]
2. El que tiene hambre atiza la olla. [He who is hungry tends the hearth fire.]
3. Hombre prevenido vale por dos. [A well prepared man is worth two men.]
4. El que nace para tamal, del cielo le caen las hojas. [He who is born to be a "tamal" will receive leaves from heaven.]
5. El sol sale para pobres y ricos. [The sun rises for the poor and the rich.]
6. En la cama y en la cárcel se conocen los amigos. [In a sick bed and in jail one knows who one's friends are.]
7. Al que madruga Dios lo ayuda. [He who rises early gets God's help.]
8. Vale más malo conocido que bueno por conocer. [It is better to keep that which is already known even though it may not be very good than to try out something new but unknown.]
9. El remedio ha de ser a tiempo. [The remedy has to be given on time.]
10. De músico, poeta, y loco todos tenemos un poco. [There is a little bit in all of us of the musician, the poet, and the insane.] (personal collection).

The proverb, as other folklore genres prove to be, is yet another important area in which the philosophy or worldview of a people can be profitably explored. Américo Paredes in his article "Folklore, Lo Mexicano and Proverbs," however, advised extreme caution when attempting to analyze the character of a people and warns against literal interpretation of proverbs and/or deducing Mexican/Chicano traits when taken out of context (1–11). Analysis of proverbs must be undertaken in the context in which these expressions are uttered. Otherwise, the social scientist or folklorist may be, albeit unwittingly, misled to make totally false and harmful generalizations about the character of a people. Valuable information regarding the Chicano experience can be gleaned from careful research of these entities and their use in Chicano households as demonstrated by Shirley Arora's article "Proverbs in Mexican American Tradition." Her study provides key insights into status and usage of proverbs by Chicanos in Los Angeles. For example, Arora found that frequent use of proverbs is most noticeable in the area of child-rearing, "from the inculcation of table manner—'El que come y canta loco se levanta,' [He who eats and sings gets up crazy] 'la mano larga nunca alcanza' [the

grabby hand has no limits]—to the regulation of social relationships and dating behavior” (1982:59). Arora also indicates that proverbs have great potential—and may indeed be already employed—for purposes of ethnic identification and group solidarity. Needless to say, more in-depth studies on proverb usage need to be undertaken to better comprehend this particular aspect of Chicano folklore.

Shirley Arora has also accomplished much research on proverbial comparisons in the Los Angeles area in her work *Proverbial Comparisons and Related Expressions in Spanish* (1977). The comparison may be defined as a phrase in which the following formulaic structures appear:

está como ...
tan ... como
tan ... que

The exaggeration likewise employs the formulaic structures of: “más ... que.” Arora interviewed 517 informants and collected thousands of entries. Some examples follow.

1. Más loco que una cabra. [Crazier than a goat.]
2. Más gordo que un elefante. [Fatter than an elephant.]
3. Más tocada que una guitarra. [(a woman) More “played” upon than a guitar.]
4. Más flaca que una lombriz. [Skinnier than a worm.]

The humorous nature and originality of many of these proverbial expressions, together with the large number collected within a relatively small geographic area (greater Los Angeles), indicate the amazing creativity present in the speech of the Chicano community. It is evident from the large number of entries of both proverbs and proverbial expressions collected by Arora that a great premium is placed on language skills and language dexterity by Chicanos. Arora has found in her study that more often than not people with a large repertoire of proverbial expressions elicited admiration and respect from the community.

Proverbs and proverbial expressions provide a strong affectivity factor toward the Spanish language and are no doubt one important reason for the high premium placed on preserving the Spanish language. The wealth of Spanish proverbs and the witticism inherent in proverbial expressions contribute to the widespread folk belief that Spanish is one of the most delightful languages in the world. This folk belief in turn brings us to closer understanding of why a conquered people, after over one hundred years of political and cultural domination, tenaciously clings to one of their cultural manifestations—the Spanish language.

Folk Theater

The folk theatre of the Chicano, like Mexican and Latin American theatre, traces its roots to the Spanish conquistadors and their religious plays. The early missionaries, interested in converting the Indians of the New World, discovered that, due to the differences in language, the representation of biblical and religious stories through dramatic enactments provided an effective means by which to indoctrinate them into the Catholic faith. Thus, early theatrical works in the western hemisphere were religious plays in which the Indians themselves played major roles and which were extremely popular with the faithful. These plays generally took place in the church atrium and were presented to the populace on specific holy days such as Christmas or Easter Sunday. When New Mexico was settled in the seventeenth century, works that had been successful in Mexico migrated with the Spanish and Mexican settlers into what is now the American Southwest. Arthur Campa and Aurora Lucero-White Lea have both collected folk plays from this region. Among those collected is “Coloquio de los Pastores,” which, according to Lea “represents that older type of traditional Nativity play which, was presented in the village church on Christmas Eve in lieu of Midnight Mass when that village had no resident priest” (5).

Other popular plays collected include: *La aurora del nuevo día* (Dawn of the New Day), *Adán y Eva* (Adam and Eve), *Los tres reyes* (The Three Kings), *El niño perdido* (The Lost Child), *Las cuatro apariciones de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (The Four Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe), and *Los moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians). One should also mention the *pastorelas* or shepherd’s plays performed during the Christmas season and which are still being enacted today. Folk theatre has influenced to some extent present-day Chicano theatre, particularly that of Luis Valdez. Like the corrido, contemporary Chicano theatre is being effectively used as a vehicle to convey and express the injustices perpetuated on the Mexican/Chicano by Anglo society.

Children’s Songs and Games

As is true of most of the other genres of folklore, children’s songs and games from the Chicano Southwest evidence basically the same categories and specimens as those from Spain. A rather flexible division of songs and games played or sung by or for children is attempted in the following major categories: (1) canciones de cuna (lullabies): “Duérmete mi niño” (Sleep my child); (2) canciones de manos y dedos: “Tortillitas” (hand and finger games); (3) rondas: “Naranja dulce” (Sweet Orange); (4) retahilas: “El castillo de Chuchurumbel” (The Castle of Chuchurumbel); (5) canciones: “La muñeca” (The Doll); (6) conjuros: “Sana, sana colita de rana” (a healing saying); and (7) miscellaneous: “escondidas” (Hide

and Seek), "matatena," "los encantados," "rayuela" (Hopscotch).

Those of us who grew up in a Spanish-speaking environment can nostalgically remember songs and games of yore such as:

(1)

Duérmeme mi niño
que tengo que hacer
lavar los pañales
ponerme a coser.

(2)

Tortillitas de manteca
pa' mamá que está contenta.
Tortillitas de cebado
pa' papá que está enojado.

(3)

Naranja dulce
limón partido
dame un abrazo
que yo te pido.

[[1]

Go to sleep my child
I have work to do
wash the diapers
and some sewing too.

[2]

Little tortillas made of lard
for mommy for happy is she.
Little tortillas made of barley
for daddy, for angry is he.

[3]

Sweet orange
lemon is cut
Give me a hug
I ask of you.)

Paredes made a revealing observation with regard to children's songs and games and cultural conflict—the basic thread that runs throughout Chicano folklore. As innocuous and free from anxiety and conflict as children's games may appear, the opposite state of affairs is discovered upon close analysis. Experts agree that children oftentimes express their fears and anxieties through play. Paredes pointed this out in a game played by Chicano children that exemplifies the point. The game is "La roña"

also known as "La mancha" (tag). In this game children flee from the one that has "la roña" and the latter in turn tries to "touch" or "tag" the others. In Texas the game is known as "La correa," a name given to immigration officers. Thus, by implication, the Texas children enact the real-life situation of Immigration and Naturalization Services officers trying to capture undocumented workers (Paredes 1966, 158).

Riddles

Riddles comprise another area of Chicano folklore. Archer Taylor provides us with the classic definition of a "true riddle": "questions that suggest an object foreign to the answer and confound the hearer by giving a solution that is obviously correct and entirely unexpected (McDowell 1979, 18). "More recently, Elli Kongas-Maranda has suggested that "the riddle is a structural unit, which necessarily consists of two parts: the riddle image and the riddle answer. In a riddling situation, these two parts are 'recited' by two different parties" (20). *La adivinanza*, as it is called in Spanish, is an integral part of the expressive culture of the Chicano. However, few studies have been undertaken on Chicano riddling habits. An exception is John M. McDowell's *Children's Riddling* (1979). McDowell's in-depth study offers extremely relevant conclusions as to the function of riddles in children's ludic activities. For McDowell,

Riddles in the modern, industrial society serve as models of synthetic and analytic thinking. They encourage children to discover the archetypal set of commonalities binding diverse experiential realities into a single, coherent world view, and at the same time, they require children to confront the tentative status of conceptual systems, thereby fostering a flexibility of cognition evidently of some utility in a great many cultural settings. (20)

The following are, some popular examples of riddles common throughout Latin America and the Southwest:

(1)

Agua pasa por mi casa
cate de mi corazón.
Si no me adivinas ésta
eres puro burro cabezón.
(aguacate)

(2)

Adivíname esta adivinanza
que se pela por la panza.
(la naranja)

(3)

Una vieja larga y seca
que le escurre la manteca.
(la vela)

(4)

Tito, Tito capotito
sube al cielo
y tira un grito.
(el cohete)

(5)

Lana sube
Lana baja
(La navaja)
(personal collection)

([1])

Water passes through my house
my beloved.
If you do not answer this one
you are a thick-headed donkey.
(an avocado)

[2]

Answer this riddle for me.
You peel it from the tummy.
(an orange)

[3]

A tall, skinny old lady
that drips lard.
(a candle)

[4]

Tito, Tito, little cape
fly up in the sky
and give out a scream.
(a firecracker)

As is apparent, the *adivinanza* challenges the intellect and the reasoning processes by offering descriptions that are close enough to resemble the objects yet so hidden between the texture (metaphors, similes) of the words as to yield them difficult to answer. The riddle, a thoroughly social act in itself in that at least two people are required for it to function, provides the players with an excellent instrument to play with language. Different opportunities are offered: rhyming schemes (nos. 1–4); disconnecting

and connecting various morphemes (nos. 1 and 5); deceiving metaphorical images (nos. 2 and 3) and alliterative, onomatopoeic sounds (no. 4).

McDowell perceived two different sets of riddles in the repertoire of the children interviewed (Chicano children from a barrio in Austin, Texas, in 1972): (1) a collection of riddles learned at school, from Anglo children, from the media (television, radio) and (2) a set of more traditional ones learned at home from parents, relatives and/or peers. One significant function deduced in this Texas study is the proposition that riddles serve enculturation purposes (enculturation being defined as “the process of induction, wherein the individual acquires knowledge requisite to fulfillment of recognized social roles” (McDowell 1979, 222). In the acquisition of the riddling/habits of the dominant society one is also being acculturated into this dominant culture. The riddle, then, aside from serving the pleasure function manifest in all ludic play, equally serves other cognitive endeavors.

Folk Belief and Folk Medicine

The folk-belief system of the Chicano community, particularly as it deals with folk medicine and *curanderismo* (healing), is one of the most controversial areas of scholarship in Chicano folklore. In a revealing article by Beatrice A. Roeder, “Health Care Beliefs and Practices Among Mexican Americans: A Review of the Literature,” the author identified four stages in the trajectory of folk belief scholarship vis-à-vis Mexican Americans. These stages include: (1) works dealing with the sources and historical development of Mexican folk medicine; (2) pioneer works of documentation—that is, collections done between 1894–1954; (3) the 1950–1960s—exemplified by Lyle Saunders and his followers (who sought to understand Mexican American health practices by placing them in their cultural context); and (4) the 1970s—includes revisionist Chicano scholars who vigorously challenge previous research findings and take a socioeconomic approach to understanding Mexican medical practices as opposed to a “cultural context” approach (1982, 223–56).

The basic controversy between the last two major groups centers upon the question of whether the Mexican American folk belief system is largely responsible for the Chicano’s “inability” or reluctance to utilize and take advantage of modern “scientific” medical services. In other words, this perspective posits that it is the Chicanos’ own cultural restraints that hamper them in obtaining adequate medical services. Chicano revisionists such as Nick C. Vaca, Miguel Montiel and Armando Morales argue on the other hand that the culture-as-culprit thesis, or “cultural determinism” as they label it, is a “myth” propagated by and used as a rationalization tool by the Anglo-dominant society, which, through institutionalized racism (such as segregated schools, lack of bilingual per-

sonnel), prevents Chicanos from attaining proper medical care. A glaring example is found in Joe S. Graham's article "The Role of the Curandero in the Mexican American Folk Medicine System in West Texas." In his introductory remarks he states:

In West Texas the term "scientific medicine" became almost synonymous with "Anglo medicine"—and still is. To my knowledge, there is not one licensed Mexican American doctor practicing in the whole rural region between Del Río and El Paso, separated by over four hundred miles—this in spite of the fact that over half of the population is Mexican American. (176)

What Graham failed to do in this otherwise sensitive article was to point out (1) that Texas has had a de facto segregated system (Chicano schools are generally much inferior to all white schools); (2) that medical schools in the United States previous to the 1970s had racial quotas and it was next to impossible for an African American, Mexican American or a woman to be admitted; and (3) that border-area residents in Texas resorted to Spanish-speaking Mexican doctors from Mexico (who in addition tend to be less expressive than their American counterparts). The above issues were totally neglected in the article which instead zeroed in on the culture-as-culprit theory.

As can be deduced from the expressed concerns of the above investigators, folk medicine has been largely studied from a social scientist's perspective and is very much the concern of the anthropologist and sociologist.

The inclusion of belief and folk medicine in this study, however, is due to their close proximity to the legend, the caso, the memorate, and personal experience narrative. Folk beliefs cover a wide range of cosmological and human experiences and are perceived by some scholars as human beings' attempt at scientific explanation for an otherwise incomprehensible event. Beliefs are interconnected with prose narratives in the sense that for any given belief there may be a "story" explaining this belief. In addition to a narrative explicating the belief, additional narratives corroborating the truthfulness or efficacy of this belief may be present. These narratives may surface in (1) the form of a personal experience; (2) an experience that happened to a close relative or acquaintance; or (3) an experience that happened to some unknown person. For example, numerous folk beliefs are associated with the Catholic religion. A common belief is the following: "A *manda* (promise) to a saint is sacred. One must always keep these promises or suffer the consequences." Generally, when the above belief is stated, a narrative or series of narratives will illustrate this specific point. The *casos* described earlier are frequently corroborating stories of a belief. There are literally thousands of beliefs. The following are but a few examples:

1. belief in the existence of witches (*brujas*)
2. belief in *curanderos/as* or folk healers
3. belief in the devil
4. belief in la Llorona
5. belief in ghosts, evil spirits, *duendes*, werewolves, vampires, headless riders, *espantos* (supernatural beings both good and bad), poltergeists, kobolds, bewitched areas or places (*lugares encantados*).
6. belief in buried treasures
7. belief in objects to put hexes or prevent bewitchment
8. belief in folk medicine and folk ailments such as *susto* (shock), *empacho* (indigestion), *aire* (air), *caer la mollera* (fallen fontanelle), *mal puesto* (bewitched).

For each of the above entities there are thousands of narratives told by the folk which detail how a supernatural event (as those sited above) took place. These narratives are narrated by someone who either experienced the supernatural event or knew of someone who experienced such an event. All of these narratives, of course, are jewels in the rough that when discovered by a literary genius can transform them into polished gems. For example, the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez utilized hundreds of folk beliefs in the process of constructing the magical fantastic universe of his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). One needs to mention only three well-known Chicano novels . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* by Tomás Rivera; *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya and *El diablo en Texas* (The Devil in Texas) by Aristeo Brito to realize the impact of folk beliefs on Chicano literature. Folk beliefs, then, are an integral significant element in Chicano folklore (and of course in the folklore of all cultures) and certainly merit continued investigation.

This necessarily short introduction to Chicano folklore provides the reader with a greater appreciation of the cultural phenomenon called folklore and with a better understanding of the richness of Chicano culture.

Puerto Rican Folklore—Rodolfo J. Cortina

Puerto Rican Folklore has its roots in the three important ethnic groups that constituted the island's population: the Arawak Indians (better known for their language by the name of Taínos), the Spanish European conquerors, and the African people whom they enslaved for work in the island which went by the Taíno name of Boriquén or Borinquen. The folk tradition which emerges from the African and Arawak worlds are shared in great measure with the sister island of Cuba. In this section emphasis will be placed on the indigenous and the European

traditions, while in the Cuban section emphasis will be on African and Spanish lore so as to avoid repetition. It is true that this also reflects to some degree the true impact of both populational cultures. This is so, not because the African presence was not felt in Puerto Rico, but because the Arawaks suffered less the Caribbean legacy of genocide left by the Spanish masters it as was a smaller island that was fraught with early outmigration and with fewer agricultural and mining projects than in the Cuban case. Also the sugar industry in Cuba produced an enormous influx of African forced labor through the institution of slavery. To these facts another important one must be added: the Arawak migration from South America to the West Indies was northward and then westward, making Puerto Rico an important locus of directional change in the movement of indigenous peoples. Also, in contrast, the island of Cuba was to be populated last and to a much lesser degree by the Arawaks. Some toponymical and folkloric data suggest that this is so: the Cubans today still identify much more with their native Indians, the Siboney and Guanajatabey populations, than with the "Taínos," and the Cubans had named a province which indicated the level of genocide, Matanzas [literally, killings]. By the time the Arawaks settled in Cuba, the Spanish invasion was not far behind. Hence Puerto Rico emerges as an important site for archaeological findings for Arawak culture, while Cuba does not. Again, these are meditations which tend to justify the treatment of African *santería* in the Cuban section and that of Amerindian lore in the Puerto Rican piece.

Arawak Mythology

The best holistic study of the Arawaks in the Caribbean is that by Stevens-Arroyo in his *Cave of the Jagua: The Mythological World of the Taínos* in which he utilizes archaeological, anthropological, folkloric and comparative religion data to weave an interpretation of Arawak culture. This work avoids two pitfalls in the process: that of specialization with blinders, which prevents scholars from looking to other disciplines in search of explanations when data from their own disciplines prevent them from interpreting a puzzle, and that of using the findings from their small share of Arawak culture to understand their own national culture or to defend a particular notion of national mythography. Stevens-Arroyo's conclusions are interesting and provide us with a panoramic picture of the world of the Arawak (he uses the word *taíno* because he concedes that it is better known, though it refers specifically only to the language of the Arawaks). Obviously, though he stands on the shoulders of giants (Rouse, Arrom, Alegría, Coll y Toste, García Arévalo, Taylor) whose studies of the prehistory of the Antilles he acknowledges, Stevens-Arroyo, by availing himself of the work of Freud, Jung, Campbell, Levi-Strauss, Eliade, Radin and Turner, is able to view his field more comprehensibly.

The story in its most simple outline is as follows: the Arawaks had advanced in their migration due to a societal imperative of compelling each generation to keep its most immediate descendants in the person of the first-born son, and forcing the remaining offspring to outmigrate their settlement. This was necessary because the cassava, fruit and fish which constituted their diet was insufficient to support a growing population. It meant that the need to take wives away from one's own parental settlement involved stealing them, sometimes calling for skirmishes with other settlements. It also meant that the linguistic development of these youngsters was not quite complete, causing a slight language shift in each wave of migration. Stevens-Arroyo implies that these were the feared Caribs, not a separate people. Their social organization, therefore, followed the patterns imposed by these necessities and their myths enveloped these needs and transformed them into divine laws. His careful reading of the *Taíno* myths—including the restoration of the text to its original transcription when possible—and his reconstitution of the *Cemi* [Arawak totem] system and its place in the *Taíno* cosmos brings him to create a table something like this:

GENDER & GENERATION	ORDER OF FRUITFULNESS	ORDER OF INVERSION
Masculine	Yucahu [guamá] Lord of yuca plant; bitterness & strength; life of worker on earth; root symbolism	Maquetaurie Guayaba Lord of the Dead; sweetness and delight; symbol of the guayaba berry, bat symbols
Twins generated from the masculine	Baibrama Guardian of workers; fire to clear earth for planting of yuca; fire of oven for making <i>cazabe</i>	Opiyelguobobirán Guardian of the Dead; privacy and felicity; Dog God
	Baraguabael Guardian of plants, animals and fish; replenisher of nature	Corocote Guardian of sexual delight, romance and spontaneity; picaresque spirit

continued next page

GENDER & GENERATION	ORDER OF FRUITFULNESS	ORDER OF INVERSION
Feminine	Attabeira Fertilizing earth water in ponds, rivers and lakes	Guabancex Driver of wind and water, wind on sea, rider of the hurricane
	Earth & Serpent Mother, protectress of childbearing and lactation	Mistress of the hurricane; the Amazon Woman, menstruating, untamed & indomitable
Twins generated from the Feminine	Márohu No Clouds, announces the sun	Guataúba Thunder, announces the stormy rain
	Boinayel Son of the Grey Serpent, clouds, announces the fertilizing rain	Coatrisquie Carrier of water to the mountains, drifting storm clouds

Other studies of the Indian influence on Puerto Rican folklore include the examination of the *areyto* or pre-Columbian song-dance of the Arawaks conducted by Cesáreo Rosa-Nieves based on the Spanish chronicles written at the time of the Conquest. Others present the more contemporary view of the *areyto* as is the case in the study by Carlos Miguel Suárez-Radillo of a school presentation of a literary "areyto de Marojo" performed at the Festival de la Tierra Puertorriqueña.

The Amerindian stratum of Puerto Rican folklore, illustrated by the studies of the Arawak or *Taíno* population, explains the significance that it has achieved in the Puerto Rican view of itself. Even though during the nineteenth century when Manuel Alonso published his important collection of folklore entitled *El Cíbaro* (1849) the definition of *jíbaro* was restricted to a white, rustic peasant born of the land (*criollo*), nowadays the term embraces the ethnicity of the *criollo* [offspring of Spanish parentage born in the New World], that of the African, as well as that of the Arawak. Today the Indian identity is an integral part of being a Puerto Rican.

The Spanish Presence

Another important approach to the folklore of Puerto Rico has to do with the enormous Spanish influence in everything from governance, economy and the arts. Of the many students of this particularly rich vein of folk manifestations is J. Alden Mason whose collecting trip to Puerto

Rico on behalf of the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History in the early part of the twentieth century has yielded four major collections of Puerto Rican oral materials. Among the findings were the traditional ballads or *romances* which appeared in 1918 in the *Revue Hispanique*, the 373 specimens including 231 *décimas*, 25 *aguinaldos* (Christmas carols), 117 nursery rhymes and other songs were published that same year by *The Journal of American Folklore*, the 800 riddles in some 1,288 variants had also been published there in 1916 (surpassed only by the Lehmann-Nitsche Argentine collection of 1030 riddles), while the folktales (mostly Juan Bobo tales, known traditionally as Pedro de Urdemalas or Juan Tonto) would appear in that journal in 1921. The Puerto Rican tradition as documented by J. Alden Mason is indeed rich in both oral narrative and poetic materials.

Following in Alden Mason's footsteps is the collecting done by María Cadilla de Martínez who in 1938 published a collection of brief studies treating several aspects of Puerto Rican manners. She includes dances, *villancicos* (songs), food, dress, sports, etc. This book she followed by one on children's songs and games from all over the island in 1940. Maxine W. Gordon continued collecting some ten years later and published in 1951 her study which concentrates on materials from Vieques, Yauco and Luquillo. Rosa-Nieves (1968) has also conducted studies of the popular theater and dances that took place in early colonial Puerto Rico and mentioned in documents written during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These are mostly ecclesiastical documents which tend to censure the performances of those folk productions.

Based on the folktale tradition and on historical legends, and following the very successful example of Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas*, Cayetano Coll y Toste writes a series of literary narratives published in a multi-volume set. Some of these are clearly derived from folklore, others are not. Likewise Antonio Oliver Frau's *Cuentos y leyendas del cafetal*, a group of literary short stories published in Yauco in 1938 and reissued in 1967, depend to a large extent on the customs, superstitions and other lore from the Puerto Rican rural areas. Some retelling for children is also done by Ricardo Alegría in his *The Three Wishes* that contains 23 tales drawn from the *Taíno*, African and Spanish traditions. His earlier collection of 12 tales (*Cuentos folklóricos de Puerto Rico*) is more conventional in terms of folklore.

Puerto Rican folklore contains a rich variety of *décimas* or ten-line poems which serve usually as lyrics for improvised songs, though they may be and are often literary in confection as well. The *décima* tradition has received scholarly attention from a variety of sources. Beside the collecting efforts, there are other aspects to the studies, and these are as follows: tracing its history, finding how it has taken root in Puerto Rico by tracking its many manifestations throughout the island, examining its performance

modes and analyzing its themes. These are topics covered in the typical studies on that poetic form as is the case of the treatment accorded to it by María Cadilla de Martínez in *La poesía popular en Puerto Rico* (published both in San Juan and in Madrid in 1933). This is the case with Yvette Jiménez de Báez's comprehensive examination of it in *La décima popular en Puerto Rico*. Her book is the most fundamental study of the *décima*. Also in the Mook piece in the journal *Names* dealing with the "Décima Onomástica" the emphasis is on general characteristics of the form, though this is but a short analysis of one of Alden Mason's *décimas*, a long one consisting of 44 verses of which every word is a personal name. Other general studies such as Francisco López Cruz's *La música folklórica de Puerto Rico* (which appeared first in San Juan in 1956, and was later reprinted by Troutman in 1967), or María Luisa Muñoz Santaella's *La música en Puerto Rico: panorama histórico-cultural* (also Troutman in 1966) do provide a framework for the *décima* within the larger context of other music. However, the most interesting aspect in terms of cultural interpretation are those very few studies that concentrate on the nature of Puerto Rican identity and the *décima's* relation to it. One example should suffice: Francisco Manrique Cabrera's "Décima, ¿Vehículo de nuestra queja?" (Vehicle of our Complaint).

In addition to both the general studies and those on the *décima*, there are studies of other forms as has been indicated by the references to Alden Mason's collecting activities above. Some of these like Marcelino J. Canino Salgado's 1968 *La copla y el romance en la tradición oral de Puerto Rico* does a very interesting survey of the history of the *coplas* and *romances* in Puerto Rico. It contains an excellent literature review of scholarly works about these song forms, an analytic description of their form (musical, metric) and the content (thematic, stylistic), several hundred songs, collected orally for the most part, including some musical transcriptions, a fine bibliography and a useful index of songs. Francisco López Cruz had also done a study of Christmas songs in his *El aguinaldo y el villancico en el folklore puertorriqueño*. Martha Ellen Davis provides in her article for *Ethnomusicology* which appeared in 1972, "The Social Organization of a Musical Event: The Fiesta de Cruz in San Juan, Puerto Rico," a historical analysis of the *Fiesta de la Cruz de Mayo*, noting its Spanish origins, its traditional celebration in the island, its decline and revival. She also explores in functional terms the need for the festival and examines the music, the practices, the organization, the participants, etc.

Another aspect of Puerto Rican folklore that needs to be considered is that dealing with folk medicine. Although the Puerto Ricans share with the Cubans the curative role of the holy persons in *santería* and the curative power of spiritism, the latter is much stronger in Puerto Rico than in Cuba. Joan Koss has studied this phenomenon and reports her findings in her 1972 article on

religious cults. There she offers an explanation of spiritism by tracing its origins in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Puerto Rico and analyzing the psychological need that it fulfills for those who are believers. In a more recent article (1975), she probes further into the relationship between spirit possession and ritualized possession trance and the potentially therapeutic relationship that emerges between the cult believer and the cult leader. Vidal has described some of the popular cures in his study of Puerto Rican folk medicine published (1972), quoting prayers and incantations, and providing the scientific name of curative plants used in the rituals. Likewise Seda Bonilla (1969) by describing a spiritualist curing session from Tipán, Puerto Rico, in 1958, is able to compare spiritualism and sorcery to psychoanalysis, particularly to the technique of psychodrama. In 1964 he had conducted a study of a Puerto Rican community in which he reported his observation of the sung rosaries, the *curanderos*, the enchanter, the casters of spells and other such matters.

Some linguistic studies about Puerto Rican Spanish have paid attention to folk speech. The most famous study is Tomás Navarro Tomás's *El español de Puerto Rico* which describes the particular features associated with Puerto Rican folk speech. The monograph written by Manuel Álvarez Nazario, *La herencia lingüística de Canarias en Puerto Rico: estudio histórico-dialectal* (1972), examines the migration from the Canary Islands to Puerto Rico to trace some influences of *canario* Spanish on local speech. The study considers folk speech within the context of folk culture to such an extent that it includes some treatment of food, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, customs, songs, dances, etc. A very complete bibliography and useful indices are appended. Zlotechew follows in this vein when he documents folk etymology claimed in the use of "buena hermosa" in Puerto Rico as a substitute for the Spanish expression "buena moza" used in the peninsula. More recently a different concern has emerged among researchers. In two other studies they seek to document the impact of English on Puerto Rican Spanish. Such is the case with Germán de Granda's study, *Transculturación e interferencia lingüística en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo: 1898-1968* (1968), which touches on controversial issues, particularly folk speech, and Paulino Pérez Sala's *Interferencia lingüística del inglés en el español hablado en Puerto Rico* (1973) which relies on fifty informants and on some broadcast media to determine the degree of interference.

Finally, it might prove useful to note the work done on other areas of folklore, specifically on material culture. In 1974 Teodoro Vidal produced a wonderful volume, *Los milagros en metal y en cera de Puerto Rico*, in which he traces the history of *milagros* (ex-votos) and examines the contemporary scene. He bases his study on field research and looks at *milagro* types, designs, manufacturing techniques in both media, and their uses. The photography is of excellent quality, and the other documentation,

in the form of notes and bibliography, is rich. Ivonne Lange's study of lithography surveys the development of religious printmaking in several Hispanic venues (the American Southwest, Puerto Rico and the Phillipines) and sets about explaining what influences the media chosen for the production of *santos* (saints). Enriqueta Narcano Zorrilla's bibliography for the study of Puerto Rican popular imagery lists books, journal articles, newspaper features, etc. on the crafting of religious images. Last, Berta Cabanillas de Rodríguez has assembled a very informative text on food. Her *El puertorriqueño y su alimentación a través de su historia (siglos XVI al XIX)* (1973) deals with the different traditions of Puerto Rican culture that contribute their choice, preparation and use of food: the Arawak, the Hispanic, the African and other influences. The information here provides an excellent background to the student of folk traditions dealing with food. It offers a few recipes and a plentiful bibliography, but it is not a folk study.

Puerto Rican folklore includes even a biological creature: the *coquí*, a small frog which perishes when transplanted, and whose distinct song is identifiable from its onomatopoeic name. It has, therefore, become a symbol of Puerto Rican identity in that it resembles the *jibaro* whose nature has changed in the national mythology since last century.

Cuban American Folklore

Cuban American folklore came into the United States through the immigration of Cubans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cuban culture itself, however, is a hybrid culture of European, African and Amerindian traditions. The folklore of Cubans, therefore, corresponds to that of their ancestors, though not in a pure form. Rather, one tends to find different types of mixtures of cultural forms. For example, in the area of religion, the fusing together of the African-Yoruba pantheon of Gods and Orishas with the Christian-Catholic God and saints forms a religion called *santería*. This phenomenon of joining two religious forms into one is termed syncretism. And it is in the United States that these hybrid cultural forms acquire adaptational quirks which are not found in the country of origin. Continuing with the example of *santería*, it is easy to see the fact that institutions such as that of the *botánica* did not exist in Cuba, but are a product of the Cuban exile community of the last thirty-odd years. The *botánica* is a store where one may purchase herbs, artifacts and other paraphernalia connected with *santería* rituals. In Cuba these things were purchased in a traditional market or from the specific suppliers of each variety of goods. For instance, the herbs might come from the *yerbero* [herb-man], or the *sopera* [soup tureen, used in the rituals] from a store specializing in the sale of dishes and crockery. The *botánica*, then, is one of those quirks

of a syncretic form which has been further adapted in the transplantation of its roots. It seems to be an anthropological verity that whenever a cultural artifact is uprooted from its home environment and placed in a different context, the artifact comes to mean something else. Such is the case of an American tourist buying a traditional Mexican mourning dress from a particular community, taking it home with her and wearing it at a party or other festive occasion. What was a sign of mourning and loss becomes a curiosity, a conversation piece, a memento of a journey. But when a group of people migrate carrying with them their cultural baggage, the shape of these cultural artifacts becomes altered with respect to the new environment, without losing their original meaning. Hence, the *botánica* as a new institution of *santería*, does not, nevertheless, alter the meanings of the different rituals performed with the materials that they supply.

It would be useful to examine some of the features of Cuban American folklore as it is manifested in Miami and other Cuban American communities of the United States. In order to have a general sense of Cuban popular lore in the United States, our focus will entail the following topics: folk religion (*santería*), folk speech, tales, jokes, sayings and folk music. Excluded is the whole area of folk arts, because, whereas Cuban popular music, folk speech, folk religion and jokes form an important corpus of popular artistry and wisdom, no such heritage exists in the plastic arts. This conclusion not only confirms personal observation, but follows a survey reported by a publication of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Organization of American States (OAS) and its monthly magazine *Américas* published in English, Spanish and Portuguese entitled *Folk Arts of the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: OAS, 1973).

Folk Religion: Santería

The religion known as *santería*, as has been made clear above, is a syncretic religion. It consists of the transplanted religion of the Yoruba and Congo peoples who, when enslaved and sold to Europeans for work in the New World, had to adapt the characteristic features of their religion to that of their new masters. So their creator god Olodumare, Olofin, or Obrún (he goes by various names) is identified with the Catholic Jesus Christ or God, the Father. He is removed from the everyday happenings of the world and depends on his *Orishas* (identified with Catholic saints) to carry on his good works. The *Orishas* have various functions, not unlike the Catholic saints with whom they identify. And like the Catholic priests, *santería* has *babalaos* who officiate at their ceremonies. This syncretism did not come about rapidly; instead, it may be viewed as a historical process. In Cuba during the Spanish colonial days (1492-1898) the Catholic church established a method to teach African slaves the mysteries of Christianity. They divided the slaves according

to their provenance (Congos, Yorubas, Dahomey, etc.), assigning to each a bishop who would visit on Sundays to impart the lessons of the catechism. And to each a virgin or saint was assigned to watch over them. These *cabildos* or *cofradías* were ethnic associations created for a religious purpose which fostered an identification of their *Orishas* with Catholic saints. Hence the syncretism of the African and European religions in colonial Cuba. This popular religiosity persisted during the period of the republic and even more so during the period of the revolution, partially because it was frowned upon in the former and forbidden in the latter. Though the first Cuban refugees brought some of these practices with them in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and during the 1960s and 1970s as well, it was not until the 1980 Mariel Boatlift that *santería* became a growth industry among Cubans in the United States. Of course, today that religion is not confined to Afro-Cubans, it is practiced by Cubans of all races. The following are some of the most popular *Orishas* and their corresponding saints:

Orishas	Saints
Changó	Santa Bárbara
Obatalá	Virgen de las Mercedes
Yemayá	Virgen de Regla
Ogún	San Pedro
Ochún	Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre
Babalú Ayé	San Lázaro
Elegguá	Santo Niño de Atocha

Changó is the *Orisha* of fire and storms. Ochún is one of his concubines, the patroness of rivers and goddess of love. Yemayá is the daughter of Obatalá and she controls the waters. Ogún is the god of war and iron. Babalú Ayé is the patron-saint of the ill and infirm, and is represented by an old leper on crutches accompanied by a pair of dogs. Elegguá is the guardian of the roads and the messenger between the gods and human beings, thus he serves as propitiator for divining the future, but possesses a foul temper and can turn a party into a bloody carnage. Obatalá, a male divinity signifying purity, is represented by a white-clad female saint—a not unusual practice—who married Oduduá and is, therefore, the father of the first gods of the Yoruba pantheon. These are but a few of the many *Orishas* in *santería*, who appear involved in the life of human beings, and who participate in the rites of that religion.

The *santería* rites practiced by Cuban Americans are few nowadays. They consist, of course, of the rite of initiation, a long process that lasts over a year with a ceremony that takes some ten days to perform; the rite of cleansing or *despojo* which serves to take away the evil spirits in the person; the rite of divination which helps believers to see into the future and to be able to act accordingly. Through the use of *batá* drums, the gods are called at many of these ceremonies. Often they come

and ride a *caballo* or on horseback (son or daughter of that *Orisha*), in a frenzied dance in which the person first loses balance and then begins to dance possessed by the *Orisha*.

The practice of *santería* by Cuban Americans serves a useful purpose for many of its practitioners in addition to any benefits derived directly from religious practice. It makes them feel as though they know their identity in times of difficulty and places them in solidarity with practitioners back in Cuba. It is a vehicle for the survival of popular culture, providing a collective popular identity and serving as an agent of socialization. Curiously, because of syncretic tendencies, the practice of popular religions does not, in the mind of the practitioners, exclude institutional religions such as the Roman Catholic faith from forming a part of one's own cultural identity.

The Oral Tradition

The Cuban oral tradition covers many different aspects of both folk speech and oral literature. The students of Cuban Spanish have categorized the different topics by defining their fields of research: those who have concentrated in *campesino* or peasant speech (Pichardo), easily detected in the *décima* song, those who have focused on the African influence of Cuban speech (Ortiz, Cabrera, Castellanos), those who have investigated urban popular speech (Suárez, Sánchez-Boudy), such as *chuchero* expressions (not unlike the *lunfardo* of Buenos Aires), and finally in the United States those who have paid attention to the bilingualism (Guitart, Castellanos) emerging from the language contact between Cuban Spanish and American English of the Southern variety by looking at the new blends of Cuban American speech exhibited primarily by the young people. The latter studies, of course, presuppose a knowledge of Cuban Spanish including the peasant, African and street dialects which together with New World standard Spanish make it up. But it is important to remember that identifying these different linguistic strands does not mean that one will usually find them neatly separated. Rather it is more typical to find them together. The character of the *chuchero* popular since the forties, for instance, is an urban dweller, a street person, who practices the Afro-Cuban religion of *santería*, who smokes marijuana, who reflects in his dress the American zoot-suiters of the same period with tube pants, pointed-toe shoes, huge hat, enormous shoulder pads, coat to the knees, a long key-chain which he twirled while standing in the corner and a hair-cut called *arte y renovación* which received constant loving attention from his comb. His speech is a blend of all the Cuban dialects. Calling his hat a *porta-aviones* (aircraft carrier) gives one an idea of his propensity for hyperbole, a very Cuban trait, and of the color of his street speech. But calling his mother sometimes *vieja* (old-lady) or other times *ocamba* (mother) connects his speech to rural peasant speech and

to Afro-Cuban dialects respectively. This speech forms part of Cuban American speech in the United States, although it is toned down somewhat. Rather than provide a long glossary, it would be better to look at one speech situation and to render it in different forms. The situation which Sánchez-Boudy uses for illustration is very appropriate here: Juan sees his friend, Pedro, and announces to him that he is about to ask his girlfriend Lola's father for her hand in marriage, and that he will do it in such a way (elite speech pattern, force of personality) which will prevent a negative from the father. This particular stratagem will be more apparent as Juan's speech becomes less standard. In standard Cuban Spanish Juan might say: "Mi querido amigo Pedro. ¡Qué alegría encontrarte! Hoy es un día muy feliz para mí porque voy a pedir a Lola. Me casaré con ella enseguida. Es el amor de mi vida." (My dear friend Pedro. Great to see you. Today is a very happy day for me because I'm going to ask for Lola's hand. I'll marry her soon. She is the love of my life.) In a more colloquial expression he might say: "Mi querido amigo Pedro; Chico, ¡qué chévere encontrarte! Hoy estoy de farolero porque voy a pedir a Lola. Con la velocidad del rayo me voy a casar con ella." In still more popular renderings one might hear Juan say: (a) "Mi hermano Pedro, estoy, mi hermano, de comparsero de los buenos. Hoy voy a pedir a Lola para caer de flai en el himeneo enseguida." (b) "Mi hermano Pedro, estoy que ya tú sabe, negro, de farolito chino. Figúrate que hoy voy a tallar con el padre de Lola para que con el consentimiento del ocambo caer con ella en San José del Lago." Meanwhile a *chuchero* might offer these two other versions: (a) "Mi hermano, estóy, ya tú te puedes figurar: de Marte y Belona con los hermanos Palau. Hoy le parlo barín al puro de Lola, la jevita mía, pa que con la venia del socio la tire de flai en Varadero y le caiga arriba nagüe con la bendición de la minfa de ella." (b) "Oye, caballón, estoy de cohete chino, negro. Le voy a caer de Tarzán al pureto de Lola que es la jeva que me aboca y chamullarle como lo haría el Pureto del Chamullo, mi hermano, para que me deje aterrizar en el promontorio de Lola, que es la lea que me llega a donde el cepillo no toca mulato. Estoy metido hasta donde dice collín."

It is impossible to fully understand these different versions of the same speech function unless one is familiar with the source lexicon of each linguistic cluster. For example, it would be very difficult to realize that the words for happiness ("estar de farolero," "estoy de comparsero," and "farolito chino") are related to the carnival in which each light carrier (*farolero*), carries a light (*farolito chino*) to lead the dancing troupe (*comparsa*), a very happy time in Cuban culture. Other expressions of happiness ("estar de Marte y Belona," "con los Hermanos Palau") refer to a dance hall of dubious reputation in Havana and to the orchestra playing there, while "cohete chino" uses Chinese as a redundancy that serves as an augmentative of rocket, marking thus a festive occasion.

Other expressions ("puro," "pureto") substitute the word *padre* or father. Speaking to him to ask for Lola's hand may be simply "pedir a Lola," or "tallar (convince) con el padre de Lola," "parlarle barín (well)," or even "caerle de Tarzán (victorious or imposing) al pureto de Lola." Yet, Juan plans to speak well (*barín*), just like the "Pureto (father) del Chamullo (speech, in this case Spanish)" would, meaning just like Miguel de Cervantes would. To marry (*casarse*) appears as "caer de flai (unexpected event) en el himeneo (marriage)" or "caer con la mujer en San José del Lago (a typical haunt of honeymooners)," or even the very carnal reference of "aterrizar en el promontorio (landing on her buttocks)." The love of Juan's life, Lola, is rendered similarly "el amor de mi vida," or "la jevita mía (little woman)," "la jeva que me aboca (woman whom I like)," or even "la lea que me llega a donde el cepillo no toca mulato (the woman who gets under my skin, literally where no brush can touch the mulatto (skin))." The "minfa" refers to her family and "velocidad del rayo" to the speed of lightning. It is easy to see how the different sources of vocabulary are allowing linguistic paraphrases to substitute the standard, making the language unique to the group.

There are other linguistic peculiarities to Cuban American speech which have to do with specific registers. For instance, the language used in the game of dominoes is very interesting and it varies somewhat with that used in Puerto Rico (for one thing Cubans use up to double 9, while Puerto Ricans only to double 6). From the name of the pieces as detailed in the list below (collected during the months of March and April 1987 at the Parque del Dominó "Antonio Maceo" located in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood at the corner of 15th Avenue and Calle Ocho):

- one: caballo, el lunar de Lola, la puyita
- two: mariposa, Doroteo, el Duque, dos veces guapa
- three: marinero, Teresita, Tres Tristes Tigres, triciclo, el Trío Servando Díaz
- four: gato, cuarteto, el catre, cuatro milpas, los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis
- five: Monja, Quintín Bandera, quinqué, sin catre
- six: jicotea, Sixto Escobar, se hizo hombre entre las mujeres, se iba sin decir adiós
- seven: caracol, se te cayó el tabaco, si te pica no te rasques, septiembre, mes de las aguas
- eight: muerto, ochoa, bizcocho, Ochún, Octavio, ochotorena
- nine: elefante, Nuevitas, puerto de mar, de nuevo a tus pies, sin novedad en el frente
- blank: Blanquita Amaro, Blanquisal de Jaruco, el fan-

tasma, coco seco, Pirey y fuerza blanca

There are also names for some of the pieces that are just as colorful as the numbers themselves. For example, the double blank is known as "gallinita blanca," (white little chicken), 1-0 is known as "el gallito tuerto," (one-eyed rooster), 4-4 as "cuácara con cuácara," double six as "caja de muerto," (deadman's coffin) and double nine as "Nabucodonosor, Rey de Babilonia" (Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon) or "el fantasma de la ópera" (Phantom of the Opera). The richness of speech, of course, comes with the many sayings that come to the fore when the players are actively engaged in implementing their game strategy, but these are too numerous to mention.

In addition to the many examples that one might be able to cull from the different speech groups or situations, it may be useful to also relate some of the popular sayings (*refranes*) which help to establish folk wisdom for the community. Some of these are more familiar to rural dwellers and tend to give advice. For instance, "No cruces al puente antes de llegar al río" (don't cross the river before you get to the bridge), "La yagua que está para uno, no hay vaca que se la coma, ni isleño que la recoja" (the plant that was meant for you to eat will not be eaten by any cow, nor will it be harvested by any island dweller). Others are more sententious in their character. For example, "Chivo que rompe tambor, con su pellejo la paga" (the goat that tears the drum, will pay with his hide), or "Camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente" (the shrimp that goes to sleep will be carried off by the current). The *refranero* tradition is very old in the Hispanic world. It created the possibility in the Renaissance for the laity to challenge the Church, which to that point possessed all authority since it controlled all the books. The *vox populi, vox Dei* (the voice of the people is the voice of God) doctrine did allow the *refranes* to be collected and held up as popular wisdom with divine sanction. From Erasmus and his *Adagia* to Mal Lara and his *refranero*, the study of paremiology has been indicative of people power and has run counter to the established orders. In Cuban and Cuban American society it reflects the class solidarity that is a feature of Cuban Spanish (this does not imply that it reflects any reality in the society, just in speech).

Popular Music

Cuban popular music is the last folk element which we will address here. The case of Cuban music is that of a mixture of Spanish and European melodic lines and harmonic conventions brought together with powerful African rhythms and a touch of the haunting evocations of an indigenous world that vanished.

From Europe the popular music was embedded in the *habanera* which served as the basis for a number of other types of composition including the *danzón* and even the

tango, a form that became famous in Argentina. Nevertheless, the form of the popular ballad form, the *romance*, was not as popular as it would be in Mexico. Rather, like in Puerto Rico, it was a song derived from Vicente Espinel (thus also known as *espinela*) that became popular among rural folk and is known as the *décima* (for ten line composition). The *décima* is anonymous, a product of the Cuban *campesino* (or *guajiro* or *montuno*: all synonymous). It is usually a simple song which addresses the themes of love of nature, mother or beloved, rural work and the complaints of the bard's existence. These themes, however, are all rendered within a general frame of good-natured fun, with the singer being able to laugh at his own problems. The songs are generally sung for an audience of family and friends, though they have sometimes become the instrument of poetic and musical dueling between two individual singers. When this is the case, it is the talent of each in the improvisation of *décimas* that make one victorious over another. The use of formulaic treatments for the composition of verses and the ease of the assonant rhyme make it a versatile form for the poetico-musical jousts of the two adversaries.

The African influence on Cuban music is definitely a much more complex phenomenon. One must take into account a number of features which are unnecessary in the case of the ballad tradition. The issue of musical instruments, of preservation of these in the new situations in which the African enslaved population now had to survive, and the acceptance of these strange new sounds by the general population, all have a part in the story. Generally, it is agreed by music historians and musicologists that the survival of the instruments had to do with their use aboard the slave ships that the Spaniards commanded as a means of bringing the human cargo to the top deck for exercise. This practice allowed the slaves to bring their drums aboard and to play them for their dances. In the island of Cuba the creation of *cabildos* allowed these African groups to devise certain changes to the practice of Catholicism under the protection of designated priests and bishops. Finally the acceptance of the African rhythms by the general population came as a result of a transformation in the population of the island, which saw the African population come to represent in the nineteenth century nearly 80% of the total population. There was much contact between the Spanish stock populace and the new Africans. Cuban music, like a great deal of Cuban culture is a product of that miscegenation. As the Cuban population settled in the United States both in the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries in different migrations, it became clear that their culture was as portable as any other. And that included their taste in music. The U. S. population had already been influenced by the commercial versions of these new rhythms and connected with the Afro-American musical creations such as jazz and others. It was, therefore, not impossible to see how Cuban Americans were able to maintain

their affinity for that strand of their own music or even to see them impact it commercially. The case of Desi Arnaz in the popular television situation comedy *I Love Lucy*, for example, always had him playing bongo drums and singing to *Babalu Ayé*, an Afro-Cuban deity, while more contemporary versions of the same phenomenon can be seen with the Miami Sound Machine's "Conga," a world-wide hit song. Within the more quiet world of the folk tradition, one is able to observe the rich use of the Afro-Cuban music in religious ceremony or in secular festivity. It is without a doubt a definite factor in the identity of Cuban Americans.



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